

March 21, 2011

Re: Support for HB 6599, An Act Concerning Discrimination

Honorable Committee Members:

I am writing to express my unequivocal and steadfast support for HB 6599, An Act Concerning Discrimination. This bill is not only important for protecting the rights and freedoms of transgender individuals but also ensuring that everyone is equal under the law, regardless of gender identity or expression.

On a community level, I serve as a board member of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network of Connecticut (GLSEN Connecticut), an organization committed to providing safe schools for all students, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. Transgender students are major targets of bullying and harassment all over the state and country, and few teachers and administrators are educated on how to handle these types of issues. I believe this bill will help facilitate the process of treating transgender individuals with respect and acceptance in their schools and communities so that they may make a difference in the world and inspire others to commit to the universal goal of social justice and equality.

On a more personal level, I have had the pleasure of working with various individuals who exist outside of society's prescribed gender norms and conventions in both community and professional settings. I have come to realize that they are no different from people who subscribe to more traditional gender norms and expectations. My transgender friends and colleagues all strive for a well-rounded education; solid career; and sustaining relationship with family and friends. The only way they are different is in how they are regarded in a prejudicial and discriminatory manner by various state agencies and institutions. This is clearly unacceptable. This bill would help all of us find common ground and realize that gender identity and expression must be included in any effective and comprehensive anti-discrimination law.

Thank you for your time, and I hope you will support this invaluable and necessary bill.

Alberto Cifuentes, Jr.

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